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ABSTRACT

This study determined the effectiveness of the use of radio as a means of providing immediate feedback on student counselors in a practicum setting. Using a non-equivalent group experimental design, 10 experimental subjects were compared to 10 control subjects with respect to counselor effectiveness. The experimental subjects were given immediate feedback via radio, but the control subjects were not given this type of feedback. The radio equipment consisted of an FM wireless microphone, a transistor radio and an earphone. The experimental subjects wore a concealed radio unit and earphone over which they received feedback in the form of the word "good" spoken by a practicum supervisor. The Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was used to measure counselor effectiveness. The adjusted post-test mean score for counseling effectiveness for the experimental group of subjects was significantly higher than the corresponding score for the control group (Author)

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COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH RADIO COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This study determined the effectiveness of the use of radio as a means of providing immediate feedback to student counselors in a practicum setting.

Using a non-equivalent group experimental design, ten experimental subjects were compared to ten control subjects with respect to counselor effectiveness. The experimental subjects were given immediate feedback via radio, but the control subjects were not given this type of feedback. The radio equipment consisted of an FM wireless microphone, a transistor radio and an earphone. The experimental subjects wore a concealed radio unit and earphone over which they received feedback in the form of the word "good" spoken by a practicum supervisor. The Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was used to measure counselor effectiveness. The adjusted post-test mean score for counseling effectiveness for the experimental group of subjects was significantly higher than the corresponding score for the control group.

COUNSELOR EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH RADIO COMMUNICATION

In the typical counseling practicum, delayed feedback is given to the student counselor following a counseling session. After the session is over, the supervisor discusses the counseling interview with the student counselor for the purpose of improving the student counselor's effectiveness. A major disadvantage of this procedure is that any mistakes that the student counselor makes during the interview cannot be corrected immediately. In fact, a week's time may elapse before the student counselor sees the client again.

Counselor educators have expressed dissatisfaction with the delayed feedback process (Korner and Brown, 1952; Ward, 1960, 1962; Pierce, 1961; Brooks and Hannah, 1966; and Cohn, 1973), and they have emphasized that immediate feedback would help a student counselor become more aware of his mistakes as he made them. Counselor educators have considered radio communication as a means of providing feedback of a more immediate nature.

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether feedback of an immediate nature could be given to student counselors during their counseling interviews in order to increase their effectiveness.

Method

Subjects

Two practicum classes containing ten students each provided subjects for the present study. The subjects ranged in age from twenty-one to forty-three, and two subjects had prior experience working in the capacity of counselor/advisor in a school system. Eleven of the twenty subjects were secondary school teachers, the remaining nine subjects aspired to work in a college setting. Ten subjects were randomly selected to comprise the experimental group, and the remaining ten subjects served as the control group. The experimental group consisted of five male subjects and five female subjects. The control group consisted of seven male subjects and three female subjects. All subjects attended the practicum classes once a week and counseled with two clients each week.

Raters

Three raters, all doctoral interns in counseling, evaluated the counseling effectiveness of the student counselors. These raters were selected because they were considered competent counselors themselves and had extensive counseling experience. The raters underwent a brief training session to familiarize themselves with the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale, the instrument used to assess counseling effectiveness. The raters did not know any of the subjects used in the study, nor were they aware of which groups the subjects were in.

Apparatus

Feedback of an immediate nature was provided by two different radio communication systems. One system consisted of a Dynatronics FM wireless microphone, a Sony AM-FM transistor radio (Model TFM-3900W), and an earphone. The second system consisted of a Realistic Apollo FM wireless microphone (Model FM-90), a Midland AM-FM transistor radio (Model 10-418), and an earphone.

Instruments

While this instrument is still considered to be experimental and validity data were not available at the time of the present study, the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was selected because of its face validity. The items for the scale were selected by Kelly and Myrick (1971) following a review of professional literature and a compilation of a list of characteristics important for the evaluation of a student counselor.

The original scale consists of twenty-seven items covering understanding of counseling rationale, counseling practice with clients, and exploration of self and counseling relationships. The scoring system is a Likert-type seven-point scale (+3 to -3).

With permission of the authors, the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale was modified to include only the items pertaining to counselor effectiveness (Items 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17,

18, 21, 22, 23, and 26), and the scale was reduced from a seven-point scale to a five-point scale (+2 to -2).

Procedure

Each of the ten subjects in the experimental group was given immediate feedback during one of their two weekly counseling sessions. All student counselors saw two clients each week, with many of the clients referred by county agencies.

Immediate feedback (the spoken word "good") was given to the experimental subjects by their practicum supervisors when the subjects correctly perceived their clients' emotional feelings and communicated their perceptions to the clients. The immediate feedback was provided from observation rooms adjacent to the counseling rooms.

The control group received the traditional process of delayed feedback. A practicum supervisor critiqued a student's performance with him immediately after the counseling session, during a fifteen minute break between counseling sessions. Because control group subjects saw two clients each week, they received approximately thirty minutes of individual feedback per week. The experimental group subjects received immediate feedback during one of their two weekly counseling sessions, in addition to the individual feedback sessions after their counseling interviews.

The experimental subjects attached the AM-FM radio to their belts behind their backs and concealed the radio

earphone wire by placing it under their shirts or blouses. If a client happened to notice the earphone and inquired about it, the experimental subject told the client, "I am receiving comments from my supervisor concerning what I have said to you." All clients were aware of the supervisory procedures employed to train masters' level counselors before entering into a counseling relationship.

Immediate feedback (the word "good") was spoken into the FM wireless microphone and heard by the student counselor over the radio he wore, but the client could not hear what was being said to the counselor.

All subjects were videotaped during their fourth and thirteenth counseling sessions for approximately twenty minutes each time. These videotapes were used as pre-treatment and post-treatment sessions which were evaluated by the raters. The raters evaluated counseling effectiveness from the videotapes (using the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale) without knowledge of whether they were watching a pre-treatment or a post-treatment session. Two scores were obtained for each subject, a pre-treatment and a post-treatment score.

The raters' evaluations of all subjects' pre-treatment and post-treatment videotapes were compared for reliability. All ratings between Raters 1 and 2, Raters 1 and 3, and Raters 2 and 3 were compared using the Spearman rank-order correlation formula. Two sets of reliability coefficients were obtained,

one for pre-treatment and one for post-treatment evaluations on the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale.

Design

The research design employed in the present study was the non-equivalent group design, as recommended by Stanley and Campbell (1963). Counseling effectiveness of the experimental subjects was compared with counseling effectiveness of the control subjects by using the analysis of covariance with the adjusted post-test means of the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale as the criterion measure, and pre-test scores as the covariate measure.

Results

Table 1 shows the group mean scores, the standard deviations, and analysis of covariance data on the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale for both groups.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 shows that both groups attained similar scores with respect to the pre-treatment rating. However, the experimental group increased their mean rating by approximately eight points, while the control group increased their mean rating by about four points from pre-test to post-test. The standard deviations for the groups indicated that the control group scores varied more than those of the experimental group

on the post-test ratings of the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale.

The analysis of covariance test produced an F-ratio of 6.55, which means that the experimental subjects scored significantly higher than did the control group with respect to adjusted post-test means for the Counselor Evaluation Rating Scale. The subjects receiving immediate feedback via radio communication were seen as being more effective counselors than the control subjects.

The reliability coefficients obtained using the pre-treatment counseling effectiveness scores and the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient formula were .94 between Raters 1 and 2, .90 between Raters 1 and 3, and .93 between Raters 2 and 3. The reliability coefficients obtained using the post-treatment data and the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient formula were lower than they were for the pre-treatment data. The post-test reliability coefficients were .79 between Raters 1 and 2, .76 between Raters 1 and 3, and .62 between Raters 2 and 3.

Discussion

A radio communication system can be used effectively to provide immediate feedback and thereby improve counseling performance during the usual eighteen week practicum course. The Hawthorne effect could have been an important factor in the outcome of this study, but wearing the radio equipment

could also have been a handicap for the experimental subjects. Perhaps there were offsetting effects for the two factors.

It is not known why the post-treatment reliability coefficients were lower than those from the pre-treatment. The subjects had nearly equal ability when they started their counseling, and through the experience of counseling week after week, some students improved their effectiveness ratings enough to change their relative ranking in the group of subjects, whereas, others did not.

A supervisor can intervene in a counselor trainee's session to provide immediate feedback about his performance. Short supervisor comments, such as "good" or "very good", can be used to reinforce either effective counselor verbal responses or good body posture. Lengthier comments or suggestions can be made to student counselors, but at the risk of delaying or interrupting the counseling process.

A special caution should be given to the supervisor who uses a radio communication system during practicum supervision. The supervisor is urged not to get so involved with providing the student with suggestions that the student becomes overly dependent upon the supervisor for responses to say to the client.

The major purpose of any counseling practicum course is to help the student counselors become more effective in utilizing their communicative skills in aiding their clients. Implementation of a radio communication system to provide

immediate feedback to counselor trainees shows potential as a means of increasing counselor effectiveness.

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TABLE 1

MEAN SCORES, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND F-RATIO

FOR THE GROUP COMPARISON ON THE

COUNSELOR EVALUATION RATING SCALE

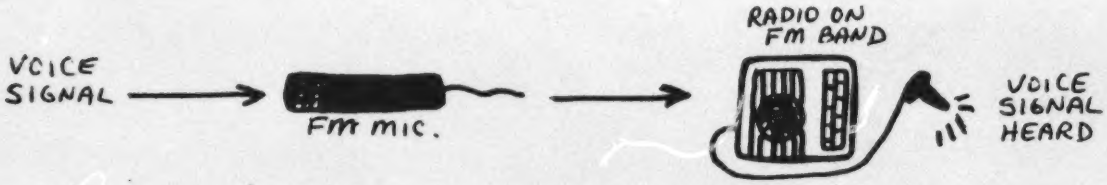
Group	Means		Adjusted Means	Standard Deviation		F-Ratio
	Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test	
Experimental (N=10)	31.89	40.05	39.69	6.027	4.0717	6.55*
Control (N=10)	31.03	35.18	35.54	6.265	7.7830	

*p < .05

TYPES OF SOUND SYSTEMS

PORTABLE SYSTEM: Counselor free to move

Materials needed: Small AM-FM transistor radio with earphone, eighteen inch section of 22 gauge wire with alligator clip soldered on one end to act as an external antenna when attached to the antenna of the radio, and an FM wireless microphone. Cost: approx. 45 dollars.



NON-PORTABLE SYSTEM: Counselor not free to roam about

Materials needed: Wollensak 1500 reel-to-reel tape recorder (common to nearly all audio-visual media centers), earphone, twenty foot extension cord for earphone, miniature jack to standard plug cable adapter. Cost: approx 3 dollars.